

TURNING ON
THE SPOTLIGHT

BY CHARLES DARNTON

THE small-cast play is looming large. Following "The First Fifty Years"—which might easily be taken for a running start of "Back to Methuselah"—Sam H. Harris is out with the announcement that he is to produce a three-actor comedy. There is also a chance of Weber and Fields coming back in a piece that they would have almost to themselves.

It is not difficult to understand the appeal of the sparsely populated drama to the managerial mind. For one thing, its transportation means little more than an upper and lower berth and a cozy corner of the baggage car. A clause in the contract stipulating that the whole company be taken from the railway station to the hotel in a taxicab would probably be granted without bloodshed. The possible advantages to every one concerned in such an enterprise are obvious, especially in these days of steep railroad rates and the high cost of actors.

But then, of course, audiences are also to be considered. In fact, they compel first consideration. The main question is whether they will be satisfied with no more than two or three actors for two or three hours. Will they get tired of the same faces, the same figures and the same voices all the time? The same persons again and again are likely to bore us, we must admit. It is this feeling, perhaps, that explains our liking for thronged streets, even though the people we see hurrying along are utter strangers. You may argue that this is the herd instinct in us, but I'm inclined to think it is our love of variety. And nowhere do we look for variety so much as in the theatre.

As you may recall, the two-actor play was tried on the public a few years ago by A. H. Woods with "Under Orders." If my memory for titles hasn't gone back on me, the only difference in physical form between that war play and "The First Fifty Years" is that Shelly Hull and Effie Shannon each acted two characters, whereas in Henry Myers's first and exceedingly promising play Tom Powers and Clara Eames each act but one character.

The strain at the Princess is consequently greater on players and audience, though relieved somewhat by differentiation in the outward appearance of the characters due to the passing of years. These changes from youth to age are accomplished with considerable skill. Possibly Mr. Powers has the more difficult task, not only for the reason that he appears to be the younger of the two, but because Miss Eames has bones that offer a better frame upon which advancing age may be hung like a gray mantle. In roles of this kind bones are important, for it is in our bones that we betray the real signs of age. Miss Eames bends here to the purpose of the play conveniently and almost eerily, and not merely because she has a long way to bend. It is as much a matter of her face as her figure. For one so boyish looking, Mr. Powers makes himself into a surprisingly credible old man, and what's more suits his voice to the years he takes on.

It would be pleasant to say as much of O. P. Heggie as the venerable impostor in "The Truth About Blayds," but it wouldn't be the truth. Fine as his performance is in every other respect, Mr. Heggie's voice is too strong for a man ninety years old. Though admirably modulated, it is by no means weak. Hearing him you might say he was sixty or seventy, even eighty, but never ninety. That is too much.

One of the first things an actor should consider when he gets a role well along in years is his voice. With all his mouthing faults, Henry Irving seldom erred in this matter of speech, possibly because he sounded catarrhal at his best. Joseph Jefferson couldn't go wrong in tone, and John Hare, for another, was invariably right when he approached the doddering age.

Nat Goodwin once told me of an experience that caused him to mend his vocal ways. "I was playing the part of a man who had been in the wilderness for weeks and finally staggered out of the woods, weakened by hardship and lack of food. But there was a good fat speech waiting for me and I tackled it with great gusto. I rather admired the way I did it until I picked up a newspaper the next day and read that I was in astonishingly good voice for a poor old fellow who was supposed to be nearly dead. I realized then that I had been talking like a giant who ate meat three times a day, but, believe me, I never did it again upon returning to civilization. No, sir, I returned to my senses, and in a hurry, too."

IN THE old days of melodrama, of course, an actor did pretty much as he pleased, and as a rule no one seemed to mind. Speaking of melodrama and keeping in mind the fact that it is represented here in its widest English form by "Bull Dog, Drummond," it is amusing to read these remarks of a London reviewer concerning "The Bat" and "The Nightcap," now playing there:

"For a good many years, and, indeed, up till very recently, it was the fashion among dramatic critics and theatrical chroniclers—especially of the more or less highbrow type—to gory melodrama, or 'blood-and-thunder' plays, as they were gen-

erally called. Now, however, most of our theatrical critics and chroniclers seem to accept examples of marrow-freezing melodrama, chiefly sanguituminous specimens from the States with rich appreciation and even gush. Yet what can be more like the old blood-and-thunder play than the American 'crook' concoctions, which are so continuously dumped down here?"

Don't you like that? And don't you especially like "sanguituminous"? There's a good, juicy word for "Bull Dog" to get his teeth into if he should happen to be hard up for a bite!

THE BIG LITTLE FAMILY



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LITTLE MARY MIXUP



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KATINKA



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Screenings
By DON ALLEN

STUMPED.

Foster Gilroy, a W. W. Hodgkinson executive, lives on figures. Give him half dozen sheets of paper all umbled up with numerals and he's as happy as a clam. In fact, he can't do anything but figure for breakfast every morning and hasn't grown thin on the diet.

So clever is he at figures that he was sent to tour Europe three years ago in the interest of one of the biggest financial houses in New York. But last Wednesday he met his Waterloo.

Locking himself in his office he worked and worked and worked. Shortly before midnight he left—completely hoked.

Here's where the snapper comes in. You thought we were going to write that he had worked up to the last minutes figuring out his income tax; but he didn't.

It was a plumber's bill.

CASTING UP.

Universal may think they are doing something decidedly novel and pleasing in reviving "Going Straight," a two-reel thriller, starring Mary Pickford in the "old days." And, as far as most folks are concerned, they probably are.

But as for the fair Mary, it's a

twenty-to-nothing shot that she will not relish it.

Once upon a time Mary and Doug returned in triumph from a trip abroad. They were wine and dined, and finally given a rousing reception at the Hotel Astor by the Friars.

During the after-dinner entertainment the grand ballroom was darkened and there on the screen was Mary in one of her first Biograph subjects. It was awful to behold.

All during the showing, Mary sat there, scarce breathing, and when it at last flickered out her sigh of relief could be heard all over the place.

Yes, we don't imagine Little Mary will be in sympathy at all, at all, with the revival.

PLAYS 'EM ALL.

Once upon a time there was a moving picture actor who had engraved in his card the mystic information that he "played everything but giants and children."

Cecil Holland, a member of the Paramount cast of "The Woman Who Walked Alone," goes him one better. Cecil once played a giant in pictures, and in the present George Melford production, featuring Dorothy Dalton, Cecil plays a South American boy. Quite some range.

SOME CHEFFES.

Pauline Garon, the charming screen player of "Inspiration Pictures," like many another screen star, prides her-

self upon her knowledge of the tricky art of cooking.

"I learned a lesson from a chum who couldn't cook," said Miss Garon yesterday. "She had planned a luncheon. The fatal day arrived. The cook was taken suddenly ill. Lying in her bed, the faithful servant gave minute instructions as to how to prepare the luncheon."

"Do you think you'll get along all right, ma'am?" asked the cook.

"Certainly, Bridget," answered my friend. "Don't you worry. There are just two things you have forgotten to tell me. What kind of soap do I use to wash the lettuce, and do I fry the bacon in butter or lard?"

"After that I learned to cook."

BIG MOVE.

Selznick is branching out some more.

Announcement is made of the forming of a big English branch of the corporation with Sam T. Morris at its head.

For the past few years Mr. Morris has been Vice President of Selznick Pictures and has acted as general manager of the distribution unit of that corporation. His selection to take entire charge of the European business of Selznick is looked upon along film row as an ideal choice.

He will leave the middle of next month to establish offices in London for Select Pictures, Ltd., the name chosen for the foreign end of Selznick. Subsidiary offices will be opened in all important European centres as

soon as the London office starts functioning properly.

OH, SHUSH!

Viola Dana, who hesitated in New York a couple of days ago on her way north, was taken by a girlhood friend to a very sedate yet artistic tea room. The lighting effect in the room was much the same as that of a movie house—dark when you first entered, but grew lighter as her eyes became accustomed to the rarefied light.

Viola felt around and found her chair, and she peered through the artificial haze. She saw nearly every chair at every table occupied. Most all of the girls were accompanied by male escorts.

After gazing awhile, Viola leaned toward her friend and murmured: "Isn't it cute in here?"

The friend opined that she was right.

"And look at all those couples tea-spooning!"

The days ARE getting longer, now aren't they?

FADEOUTS.

Having finished his third two-reel comedy for First National release, Ben Turpin turned right around and started his fourth. Just like that.

Allen Holubar has engaged Gertrude Astor as principal feminine support of Dorothy Phillips in "The Soul Seller."

Edward Walton, Tully learned how

to make motion pictures by watching "em shoot" "The Masquerader." Now he's watching a chauffeur in order to learn how to drive a car. Careful there, Dick! Careful!

Francis Marion, scenario writer for the Talmadge sisters, is New Yorking awhile on a vacation.

Shooting of additional scenes found necessary for "Jim," Thomas H. Ince's latest film, is going merrily on while the finished portion is being edited and titled.

John G. Robertson, Director of Famous Players-Lasky Company, has been loaned to Mary Pickford and will direct her in her retaking of "Tess of the Storm Country," her most popular film.

Betty Blythe, who gained fame in the title role of "The Queen of Sheba," returns to Broadway in Rex Beach's "Fair Lady." She is still retreating, as her part is also that of a queen.

Carey Wilson, the scribe, has been made associate editor of the Goldwyn scenario department.

Jesse L. Lasky announced yesterday that Penryn Stanlaw's next picture, following "Over the Border," will be "Cynthia Stockwell's" "Pink Gods and Blue Demons." Constance Binney will be featured.

"The Ordeal" is nearing completion. Paul Powell, the director, says: "The Ordeal" hasn't been any such a thing. Warren W. Lewis, puffiest for Hodgkinson, has just been elected President of the Jackson Heights Tennis Club. Which clinches the proof that tennis is not a ladies' game.

Edward Walton, Tully learned how

It May Be Cheaper at That!



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"They Don't Answer!"



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Troubles Never Come Singly!



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RHYMED THRILLS

Herman Sage of East 107th Street says the greatest thrill he ever had was yesterday, when he read a poem of his own to a street sweeper up his way and was told it was fine. On receiving the commendation of the street employee Herman sought the subway and delivered the rhyme to us. Here's the very rhyme:

She was the one maid on my list
I didn't want to lose.
Upon a ring did she insist.
I could not well refuse.
She got the ring, which greatly vexed
Her, 'cause it had no stone.
And (lest fond reader be perplexed)
'Twas on the telephone.

FOOLISHMENT.

I cannot sing as once I did,
My voice is giving out.
In looks, though, I am still some kid,
Beyond the slightest doubt.

To-day my sweetheart said to me:
'Don't fret, you handsome thing!
You're still my darling honey bee;
Let other blockheads sing!'

A THOUGHT FOR TO-DAY.

Erbert Schwab, who used to be considered by Wellsville people a worthless boy, is now the best mandolin player in Bogash, O.

About Plays
and Players
By BIDE DUDLEY

SAM H. HARRIS has in rehearsal a play called "My Lady's Lips," by Edward Lasker, who wrote "The Climax." Martha Hedman, William Powell and Gilda Lewis are the only players in it and there is but one set of scenery. Sam Forrest, who is directing the staging, says that despite the smallness of the cast it is a very promising play.

ZIEGFELD TRAVELLING.

F. Ziegfeld Jr., within a few hours after arriving from Palm Beach, took a train for Pittsburgh to visit his wife, Billie Burke, who is playing there. He will accompany her to Chicago, Saturday to see her begin an engagement Sunday. "The Ziegfeld Frolic" with Will Rogers, opens in Chicago Sunday also. The producer will return to New York late next week and begin arranging to cast the next "Follies."

TO MY SWEETHEART.

(By Bill Necht.)
The nose is red.
The lace is blue.
Hooch is dear,
And so are you.

JACK DOESN'T LIKE IT.

When the Selwyns named their next "Follies" and "Primettes" play "The Schenck Six," Jack Welch, one of their lieutenants, decided to find out what the title meant. Nobody in the Selwyn organization could tell him so he sought a rabbi and asked him, "It means it's no good—you take it," said the rabbi.

"Well, that goes for the show's title," grunted Jack. "You take it!"

ATTENTION, MANAGERS!

L. S. Clarke, who admits having followed this column for years, writes up to ask that we suggest that the theatrical managers pay some attention to the amateur nights at the vaudeville houses and thus pick up some good talent for their shows. He says he heard a wonderful amateur tenor at Moss's 207th Street Theatre recently. Very well, we hereby make the suggestion. By the way, Mr. Clarke, what's good for a vaudeville place on one toe? We've got such a spot and it pains like the very devil.

ADVICE TO POETS.

Never send an editor a poem of less than forty-six verses. Editors like long poems and will throw out advertising to get them in the papers.

Don't let anybody tell you "baby" doesn't rhyme with "lady." Those who criticize are jealous.

It is always best to inclose several stamps with your rhyme. Ten two will buy an editor a pork chop, you know.

Never be too serious in your poems. For instance, one on "The Old Electric Chair," should have comedy relief.

After telling of the electrocution you might have a line reading: "Bald the Warden with a wink, 'Come on, boys, I'll 'bury' a drink!'"

After your first poem is printed it is well to give up speaking to the common people. Quit your job, rent a dinky attic studio in Greenwich Village and starve to death.

GOSSIP.

Nan Halpern, at the Winter Garden next week, will be starred in a new Shubert musical comedy.

A benefit show for the French Day Nursery will be held at the Lyceum Theatre to-morrow night.

The Claf Club will give a series of six Sunday concerts at the Lyric Theatre beginning to-morrow night. King Jazz will preside.

New York's west side dancers will compete in a preliminary of the fox trot championship contest at Terrace Garden Dance Palace to-morrow afternoon. New Jerseyites will compete Tuesday night. Monday night an old-fashioned store event will be held at the Dance Palace, and Wednesday night there will be a variety of novelties.

Fritz Leiber, Shakespearean star, is entering vaudeville Monday at Proctor's Theatre, Mount Vernon.

FROM THE CHESTNUT TREE.

"My wife and I live as one."
"My wife and I live as ten. She's one and I'm nothing."